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RUCOWCV/CUSTOMS CARIBBEAN ATTACHE MIAMI FL PRIORITY
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAHLA/HOMELAND SECURITY CENTER WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEPINS/HQ BICE INTEL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEFHLC/HQS DHS WASHDC PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTO DOMINGO 002722

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [SMIG](#) [MCAP](#) [HA](#) [DR](#)
SUBJECT: CESFRONT - TOWARDS MORE EFFECTIVE CONTROL OF THE
DOMINICAN-HAITIAN BORDER

REF: 2006 SANTO DOMINGO 793

Classified By: ECO-POL COUNSELOR DAN BELLEGARDE
FOR REASONS 1.4(B) AND (D).

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Embassy MilOff and PolOff visited the border towns of Dajabon and Comendador to investigate the recent deployment of the special unit for border control - (Cuerpo Especializado Fronterizo or CESFRONT). CESFRONT was deployed at the end of September to the four official border crossing points along the Dominican-Haitian border. Although there were reports of human rights abuses, paralysis of cross-border trade, and poor coordination among military, political and civic leaders immediately following deployment, stakeholders now seem optimistic about the government's efforts to effectively control and secure the border. End Summary.

Initial Issues - Dajabon

¶2. (SBU) Following a USG multi-agency assessment noting that "every Dominican authority tasked with border management is currently failing its mandate to exercise sufficient control of the frontier," (REFTEL) CESFRONT was created as a special unit, under the Secretary of the Armed Forces, to monitor and control the border. Presidential decree 325-06 defined the mandate of CESFRONT as "control of the entry and exit points of the border from the illegal flow of immigrants, drugs, contraband, and arms." The unit was deployed in late September, shortly after President Fernandez met with farmers to discuss a specific border issue -- the smuggling of rice.

¶3. (C) The initial deployment of CESFRONT raised several issues. The governor of Dajabon province stated to Embassy officials that some CESFRONT officers and rank-and-file committed "indiscretions" during the initial deployment. The mayor of Dajabon characterized these as mistreatment, including beatings of Haitians and Dominicans by CESFRONT personnel. The mayor also stated to EmbOffs that there was photographic and video evidence of the unit's personnel requesting "border crossing tolls." The leader of Border Solidarity, a civil society organization advocating for migrant rights, also stated that CESFRONT personnel committed human rights abuses including beatings and illegal

repatriations of Haitians.

14. (U) The press reported that during the initial deployment of CESFRONT, the unit effectively shut off all cross border traffic, including legitimate trade. Trade with Haiti, according to the governor, was responsible for Dajabon's recent economic growth. The deputy governor told EmbOffs that Dajabon has the second largest volume of export traffic in the country. The governor characterized the trade with Haiti as humanitarian - Haitians can obtain basic commodities such as rice, cured meats, dried goods, and other agricultural products. The Haitians in turn sell clothing, agricultural and industrial products as well as arts and crafts.

15. (C) The leader of Border Solidarity stated that CESFRONT's deployment lacked a legal framework and was based on personalism and personal interests. (NOTE: In the Dominican Republic, this is a way of referring to corruption.) The mayor also alluded to enormous personal interests influencing the control of the border. A credible MilOff contact told EmbOffs that the lack of initial community support plus allegations of abuses and corruption with CESFRONT, may result in higher level government officials not fully supporting the special unit. The source alluded to the government not providing CESFRONT with an adequate budget which may result in CESFRONT "dying on the vine."

16. (C) By all appearances, the deployment of CESFRONT was abrupt. Though CESFRONT has supposedly been training for over a year, the mayor of Dajabon stated that she was not informed in advance of the deployment and there was no campaign to educate local officials, civil society leaders, and citizens of the effect of the deployment. The mayor also accused the governor of corruption and told EmbOffs of the lack of cooperation and communication between her and the governor. (NOTE: The mayor is the ex-governor of Dajabon and is from the same party as the governor, the Dominican Liberation Party (PLD).)

...however, in Comendador, Elias Pia

17. (SBU) The deployment of CESFRONT in Comendador in the province of Elias Pia did not result in similar issues. There were no widespread reports of human rights abuses. A Directorate of Immigration supervisor stated to EmbOffs that CESFRONT has done a fine job in controlling the border traffic, especially on market days. She stated that CESFRONT has created an orderly line of persons crossing from the border gates, then to Customs, then to the market. Unlike in Dajabon, Immigration and Customs had a visible presence at the border crossing, with an Immigration and Customs office. (NOTE: While at the border crossing gate, EmbOffs observed migration officials repatriating about 70 Haitians. Prior to being released across the border, Immigration collected a document with the biographic information and photo of each person. Immigration stated there was no Haitian consular presence to receive and process the repatriated Haitians.)

18. (C) The governor of Elias Pia stated there has been marked improvement since the deployment of CESFRONT. He stated persons who are crossing are treated more humanely and with dignity. He stated that trafficking and smuggling of persons have decreased. CESFRONT's presence has resulted in the ordered movement of cross border traffic and has increased customs receipts from 4 million pesos/monthly (approximately \$120,000 USD) to almost 9 million pesos/monthly (approximately \$270,000 USD).

Guarded Optimism

19. (SBU) Looking to the future, the governor and CESFRONT

commanders in Dajabon told EmbOffs that the 8 rank-and-file and 2 CESFRONT officers accused of human rights abuses and corruption have been sanctioned and removed from their posts.

The CESFRONT commander also told EmbOffs that officers and rank-and-file are to be rotated and attend training on a regular basis.

¶10. (SBU) The governor, mayor, CESFRONT commander, and Border Solidarity leader in Dajabon also reached an agreement on other issues regarding trade. In order to facilitate cross-border commerce and trade, CESFRONT will allow Haitians to cross with minimal inspection on Mondays and Fridays during market days. During these days, border gates open at 8:00 AM, allowing as many as 15,000 Haitians to cross into the Dominican Republic. For non-market days, Migration will provide a special ID (carnet) for domestic employees, laborers, and merchants to cross. There is no fee to obtain a carnet, though there were initial discussions suggesting a charge of 500 pesos (approximately \$15 USD). A CESFRONT officer told PolOff that presently Immigration is only processing carnets for women (presumably only for domestic employees).

¶11. (SBU) The leader of Border Solidarity told EmbOffs that despite his opposition to CESFRONT for lack of a legal mandate, he is on board with the agreements. Dajabon,s mayor agreed with the mandate of CESFRONT; however, she believes various government agencies need to communicate and share more information regarding CESFRONT operations.

¶12. (C) COMMENT: Several sources in Dajabon commented that if CESFRONT is to be a viable, border security force, collective interests have to precede personal ones. In that respect, the agreement between local officials, CESFRONT commanders and civil society in Dajabon is an encouraging step. The CESFRONT commander in Comendador, seasoned by years of experience in border operations, stated he was

optimistic about the future of CESFRONT as a specialized unit for border control. The government has created specialized units in the areas of transportation (AMET) under the control of the National Police, and the seaports (CESEP) and airports (CESA) under the control of the Armed Forces. These units have a better reputation for professionalism, training, and honesty than regular security forces. CESFRONT, with the appropriate training and budgetary support should not be an exception.

BULLEN